adventure women

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New Zealand: Hike, Cycle, and Paddle South Island

DURATION | 12 Days

TRIP LEVEL | Level 4 - High Energy

Trip Overview

Experience the breathtaking South Island of New Zealand, renowned for its rugged mountains, pristine lakes, and lush forests. Home to Aoraki/Mount Cook it is often called the eighth Wonder of the World — this region promises adventure and beauty. Meet your guide and fellow adventurers as you embark on this unforgettable journey, encouraging one another to step beyond comfort zones. Explore the Hollyford Track along the Hollyford River, hike through the stunning Matukituki Valley, and navigate glacial lakes dotted with icebergs. E-bike through coastal landscapes on a section of the Great Taste Trail, paddle a traditional waka, and hike the famous Coastal Track. Your adventure culminates in Nelson, where a special farewell dinner celebrates the new friendships forged and the extraordinary experiences shared in this mesmerizing land.

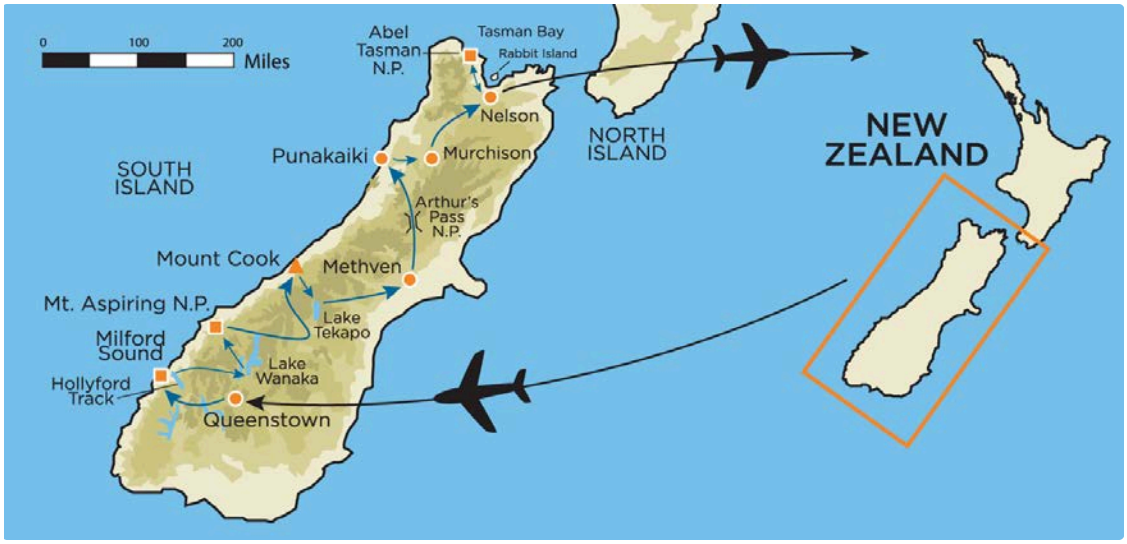
Trip Highlights

• Experience unforgettable hikes and explore Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, Aspiring National Park, Fiordland National Park and the Hollyford Valley for incredible views!

• Jet Boat on the Hollyford River, Boat Cruise through Tasman Valley, Ferry to Rabbit Island, and paddle a Waka in Abel Tasman National Park.

• Cycle the scenic Great Taste Trail on e-bikes, sampling local wines along the way. Then, learn harakeke weaving skills from local women.

Map View



Arrival: Arrive in Queenstown, New Zealand (ZQN) on Day 1 by 4:00 PM.

Departure: Depart from Nelson, New Zealand (NSN) on Day 12 after 12:00 PM.

Trip Itinerary

Day 1

Arrival in Queenstown

Arrive in Queenstown by 4 PM and settle into Scenic Suites Queenstown. After checking in and relaxing, gather with your fellow travelers for a lively welcome dinner. Enjoy delicious food and drinks while sharing stories about your excitement for exploring New Zealand. This evening marks the beginning of your adventure, where you'll bond with other women ready to embrace the natural beauty and cultural richness that lies ahead.

Meals: dinner | Overnight: Scenic Suites Queenstown

Scenic Suites Queenstown

Nestled in one of Queenstown's most desirable locations, Scenic Suites Queenstown, offers the perfect blend of comfort, style, and convenience. Perched on an elevated position, the hotel boasts stunning views of the Southern Alps and the shimmering waters of Lake Wakatipu, providing a picturesque backdrop for your stay. Recently refurbished, this accommodation combines modern elegance with homely comfort.

Amenities include: complimentary toiletries, bathrobes, hair dryer, refrigerator, coffee / tea maker, safe, flatscreen cable / satellite TV, Wi-Fi, air conditioning

Trip Itinerary

Day 2

Journey to Milford

Depart early for a scenic four-hour drive to Milford Sound. Here, part ways temporarily with your lead guide and and meet your guide for the Hollyford Track and board a helicopter for a breathtaking flight over the fjord. After landing at Martins Bay, enjoy a delicious lunch in a safari-style tent, then embark on a walk through a lush coastal forest alive with bird song. Look out for rare wildlife, including the Fiordland crested penguin, and return via jet boat for a delightful three-course dinner while reflecting on an incredible day. Today's Hike: 4 miles, 2-3 hours.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Martins Bay Lodge

Martins Bay Lodge

Located on the lowland flats near the mouth of the Hollyford River, this unique wilderness lodge is well-appointed with dining and lounge areas, open fires and drying rooms. The lodge runs on battery bank powered electricity, and conserves energy by turning off some electrical facilities overnight. However, lighting is available throughout the night, and 24-hour power is available in the lounge area. For this trip, only double occupancy is available at this property.

Amenities include: lodge bedrooms are all ensuite with bedding, towels, hot water bottles, complimentary toiletries and hair dryer. There is no cell phone service at this lodge and limited access to internet.

Trip Itinerary

Day 3

Hollyford Valley Adventure

Wake up to the beautiful dawn chorus of native birds before enjoying a hearty breakfast. Then, board a jet boat for a captivating ride up Lake McKerrow to the Hollyford River, where the mountains rise dramatically. Start your 11-mile hike through the Hollyford Valley, carrying your main pack as you retrace the steps of early Māori explorers. Marvel at the native beech forest and tumbling waterfalls while learning about the rich ecology of the area. After a day filled with breathtaking scenery and historical insights, enjoy a hearty dinner at your accommodation in Te Anau. Today's Hike: 11 miles, 6-8 hours, elevation 143 m/470 feet.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Distinction Te Anau Hotel and Villas

Distinction Te Anau Hotel and Villas

Surrounded by extensive, colorful gardens and overlooking spectacular Lake Te Anau and the Fiordland ranges, this Hotel and Villa accommodation sets the tone for your stay in one of the world's most breathtaking regions.

Amenities: complimentary toiletries, flatscreen TV, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary

Day 4

Hiking Matukituki Valley

Depart Te Anau for a scenic three-hour drive to Wanaka, where you'll enjoy a picnic lunch by the lake. In the afternoon, hike the stunning Matukituki Valley (4.5 miles, 3 hours, 320 m/1,049 ft elevation), winding through pristine beech forests with views of Lake Wānaka, the Southern Alps, and Mount Aspiring/Tititea. Choose from several hiking options, including the easy Diamond Lake Circuit or the more challenging Rocky Mountain Summit Track with panoramic alpine views. After a day of exploration, enjoy dinner on your own in Wanaka.

Meals: breakfast, lunch | Overnight: Oakridge Resort Wanaka

Oakridge Resort Wanaka

Situated just 3 kilometers from New Zealand's 4th largest lake, this relaxing hotel is surrounded by beautiful nature and is a great starting point for outdoor activities. Among the fine facilities of Oakridge Resort Wanaka are heated pools with poolside bar and a day spa. The hotel also comes with an excellent restaurant serving creative New Zealand cuisine prepared with the best local ingredients.

Amenities: complimentary toiletries, tea/coffee maker, cable/satellite TV, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary

Day 5

Hike to View Aoraki/Mount Cook

Starting at 9 am, drive through the Lindis Valley and arrive at the breathtaking region of Aoraki/Mt Cook. Travel up the Tasman Valley towards the Tasman Glacier, the longest glacier in New Zealand. In the afternoon, hike the Hooker Valley Track to enjoy views of the Mueller and Hooker Glacier terminal lakes as well as the towering south face of Aoraki/Mt Cook. Todays hike will be 6.2 miles, 3-4 hours, elevation 115 m/377 ft.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Hermitage Hotel

Hermitage Hotel

Since the late 1800's, the Hermitage has been an iconic hotel located in a world-class destination. Offering the facilities and services of a global chain while being local, the Hermitage provides breathtaking views of the surrounding landscapes and impeccable service.

Amenities: complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, minibar, coffee / tea maker, electric kettle, safe, flatscreen TV, cable / satellite TV, Wi-Fi, air conditioning

Trip Itinerary

Day 6

Sealy Tarns Hike

Hike up to Sealy Tarns and enjoy the awe-inspiring views of Mt. Sefton, Mueller Glacier and the Hooker Valley to Aoraki/Mt Cook. Spend the day exploring the charming alpine village and expand your knowledge of the national park's wonders by visiting the world-class visitor center. Todays hike will be 3-5 miles, 4-6 hours. Elevation of Sealy Tarns: 516 m/1,692 ft,

and Mueller Ridge: 946 m/3,100 ft. walking poles recommended.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Hermitage Hotel

Trip Itinerary

Day 7

Boat Cruise in Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park and Tekapo

Join your local Glacier Guides for a scenic boat trip up the Tasman Valley toward New Zealand's longest glacier. Walk through glacial moraine, then cruise among icebergs on the ever-growing terminal lake. After lunch with your lead guide, depart Aoraki/Mt Cook and journey through the sweeping McKenzie Basin to Lake Tekapo. Stroll the lakeshore or make a quick hike up Mt John. End the day in Methven—a ski town turned rural retreat—for dinner and a restful night.

Today's Hike: 1.2 miles, 1 hour, flat terrain.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Ski Time Resort

Ski Time Resort

A comfortable lodge featuring a lounge, terrace, and garden.

Amenities: complimentary toiletries, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary

Day 8

Castle Hill and West Coast

Embark on a 1.5-hour drive to the enchanting limestone outcrops at Kura Tawhiti (Castle Hill). This area, significant for early Māori, was dubbed the “Spiritual Centre of the Universe” by the Dalai Lama. Explore the captivating rock formations before continuing through Arthurs Pass, where you can hike to Punchbowl Falls or take the Centennial Hike if time allows. After a two-hour drive to the West Coast, explore the world-famous Pancake Rocks and their striking formations. Check into your accommodation, then join your guide for a sundowner on the beach.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Scenic Hotel Punakaiki

Scenic Hotel Punakaiki

A breath-taking oceanfront sanctuary featuring modern and comfortable rooms, ocean views, and sounds of the Tasman Sea.

Amenities: complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, coffee / tea maker, flatscreen TV, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary

Day 9

Paparoa National Park to Nelson

Start the day with an easy, scenic walk along the Pororari River Track, winding through limestone canyons, rainforest and nīkau palms. Visit Vosso Studio to meet artist Fiona and hear about her nature-inspired work and conservation efforts before enjoying lunch at the studio. Then farewell the West Coast and drive around four hours to Nelson. Today's Hike: ~4.6 miles, 2 hours, well formed trail, gradual climb of 500 feet.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Delorenzo's Apartments Nelson

Delorenzo's Apartments Nelson

Nestled in the heart of Nelson, New Zealand, DeLorenzo's Studio Apartments offers a refined stay for the discerning traveller. With 30 comfortable studio apartments, the accommodation strikes a lovely balance of upscale comfort and relaxed local charm. Location is a standout feature. Situated at 43–55 Trafalgar Street, just a few minutes' walk from Nelson's cafés, galleries, boutiques and city restaurants — you're centred in the action while still enjoying a serene apartment-style retreat.

Amenities: complimentary toiletries, hair dryer, kitchenette, coffee/tea maker, flatscreen TV, air conditioning, Wi-Fi

Trip Itinerary

Day 10

Cycling the Great Taste Trail

After a relaxed breakfast, explore Nelson with its boutique shops and cafés, where you can enjoy an early lunch. Then you get geared up for our half day cycle experience late morning. Pedal along scenic boardwalks and coastal trails to a local winery, where you'll enjoy a wine tasting surrounded by the region's most historic grapevines. We then make our way back to Nelson for dinner on your own. Today's Cycling: ~ 16 miles, ~ 4 hours.

Meals: breakfast | Overnight: Delorenzo's Apartments Nelson

Trip Itinerary

Day 11

Hiking and Paddling in Abel Tasman National Park

Experience the beauty of Abel Tasman National Park by paddling a waka (double-hulled canoe) in the early morning. After a traditional karakia (blessing), learn about waka etiquette before embarking on your journey with local hosts. Enjoy breakfast along the way and participate in traditional harakeke weaving with local women. After this enriching experience, take a water taxi further into the park for a scenic hike along the famous Abel Tasman Coastal Track from Bark Bay to the Falls River suspension bridge. Enjoy time for a swim before returning to Kaiteriteri and celebrating with a farewell dinner in Nelson. Today's Hike: 5 miles, 2-3 hours, elevation 200 m/650 ft.

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Overnight: Delorenzo's Apartments Nelson

Trip Itinerary

Day 12

Depart Nelson

On your final day, enjoy breakfast with your newfound friends before preparing for departure. There will be a group transfer to Nelson Airport, allowing you to bid farewell to your adventure companions. You can book your return flight any time after 12 PM, concluding your unforgettable journey through the stunning landscapes and rich culture of New Zealand. Take home cherished memories and new friendships as you head back to your daily life.

What's Included

What's Included

• Accommodations as per itinerary based on double occupancy
• All meals as listed in the itinerary
• All ground transportation
• Airport transfer on scheduled departure day
• Guided sightseeing and activities as indicated in the itinerary
• Tea, coffee, juice, and soda water at breakfast and lunch
• Entrance fees for sites listed in the itinerary
• Drinking water available in large jugs to refill personal bottles
• Snacks in vehicles
• Gratuities for hotel staff, luggage porters, and waitstaff

Not Included

• International airfare to and from New Zealand
• Airport transfer on arrival day
• Optional activities
• Meals not specified in the itinerary
• Soft drinks, tea, and coffee at dinner
• Alcoholic beverages (unless otherwise specified)
• Fees for passport, visas, immunizations, or travel insurance
• Cost of hospitalization or evacuation
• Items of a personal nature
• Gratuities for guides

Please note: AdventureWomen will attempt to adhere to the itinerary as much as possible. However, certain conditions (political, climatic, environmental, and cultural) may necessitate changes in the itinerary. AdventureWomen reserves the right to alter any itinerary at any time if necessary. We will attempt to notify participants of changes as far in advance as possible. Costs incurred by such changes will be the responsibility of the participants.